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**USDA PROVIDES \$21 MILLION TO SPUR JOB AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN 18 STATES** Effort could help create or save up to 1,738 jobs

WASHINGTON, June 30, 2003—Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the award of over \$21 million to 18 states to foster business and community development in rural areas.

“Investing in rural America is a key component of President Bush’s economic plan,” said Veneman. “These funds will help create job opportunities for thousands across the country.”

The following is a complete list of approved project dollars by state. A description of each funding recipient can be found at the USDA Rural Development web site at:  
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

Arizona - \$750,000  
California - \$2,250,000  
Idaho - \$300,000  
Maryland - \$2,000,000  
Missouri - \$500,000  
Montana - \$597,000  
Nebraska - \$750,000\*  
New Hampshire - \$500,000  
New York - \$300,000  
North Carolina - \$5,000,000  
North Dakota - \$500,000  
Ohio - \$750,000  
Oregon - \$360,000  
Pennsylvania - \$750,000  
South Dakota - \$2,750,000  
Utah - \$1,750,000  
Washington - \$750,000  
West Virginia - \$500,000

“For rural America to grow and attract jobs, tools are needed to promote business opportunities,” said Agriculture Undersecretary for Rural Development Thomas Dorr. “The \$21,057,000 will increase business opportunities and could create or save up to 1,738 jobs.”

This assistance is being provided through Rural Development’s Intermediary Re-lending Loan Program (IRP). IRP provides revolving loan funds and technical assistance for business facilities and community development projects in rural areas and cities with a population of less than 25,000. Rural Development lends funds to intermediaries who then provided loans to borrowers who are developing business facilities or community development projects. Eligible intermediaries include public bodies, nonprofit corporations, Indian tribes, and cooperatives.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development

provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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\*NEBRASKA - \$750,000 -- Panhandle Area Development District, Gering, Nebraska, \$750,000. These funds will be used to be a part of an Economic Development Loan Fund that will service an 11 county area of the Nebraska Panhandle. USDA funds will be used to leverage an additional \$2.8 million in funds from other sources to assist economic development in the most remote eleven counties of the state.